Family Violence and Personal Safety

Women in Nova Scotia

Part 3 of a Statistical Series

Nova Scotia Advisory Council
on the Status of Women
PO Box 745, Halifax, NS B3J 2T3
Phone: 902-424-8662 / 1-800-565-8662
Fax: 902-424-0573
E-mail: nsacsw@gov.ns.ca
Internet: http://www.gov.ns.ca/staw/

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Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2001

About the Council...

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established by provincial statute in 1977. The Council's mandate under the *Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act* is to advise the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and to bring forward the concerns of women in Nova Scotia.

The Council's work touches on all areas of women's lives, including...

- ♀ family life
- ♀ economics
- ♀ legal rights
- ♀ sexuality
- ♀ health
- ♀ education
- ♀ paid and unpaid work
- ♀ violence

Council pays close attention to the experiences of women who face barriers to full equality because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, ability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

We are committed to voicing women's concerns to government and the community through policy research, information services and community liaison. Working cooperatively with women and equality-seeking organizations, our mission is to advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women.

Acknowledgements

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Preface

The purpose of this statistical series is to meet the needs of a wide range of audiences for statistics describing the situation of women in Nova Scotia. Ready access to statistical information on important aspects of women's lives such as family, education, paid and unpaid work, income, and health meets many different needs. For instance, requests for statistical information make up a significant proportion of all requests for service made to our resource centre. Policy makers, educators, students, and many other individuals and organizations are frequent users of such information. Current statistical information is essential to provide advice to government about policies and programs that affect women.

In 1990, the Nova Scotia Women's Directorate published *Women in Nova Scotia: A Statistical Handbook*, a synthesis of facts and figures on women in Nova Scotia. The first edition of *Women in Nova Scotia* was an overwhelming success. Audiences ranging from government policy makers, women's organizations, educators, students, and the media made frequent and varied use of the materials. Due to the continuing high demand, a second edition of *Women in Nova Scotia* was released in 1995 with updated statistics and an easier-to-read format.

The current series, therefore, marks the third "edition" of *Women in Nova Scotia*. The change to a series rather than handbook format will allow for a greater frequency of publication. As with previous editions, this series has been designed to provide easy access to facts and figures about women in Nova Scotia. Considerable effort has been made to use the most up-to-date statistics available as well as to present data on the wide diversity of women in Nova Scotia, including young women, older women, Black and other racially-visible women, Aboriginal women, and women with disabilities whenever such data were available. The array of topics covered has now expanded to include a section on women's personal safety and experience with family violence in addition to the sections on demography and family life, education, paid and unpaid work, and income/poverty that have been included in previous editions. In addition, all sections of the current series will be made available in PDF format on the Advisory Council's website (http://www.gov.ns.ca/staw/). These changes and the resulting statistical series will appeal to an even wider audience and will be of use to many individuals and organizations.

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Introduction

Freedom from violence and a heightened sense of personal safety play an important role in the development and maintenance of women's equality and overall well-being. The statistical information that follows provides us with a current sense of Nova Scotian and Canadian women's experience with violence, its consequences, and some of the services that have been put in place to attempt to address this issue.

Two large-scale Statistics Canada surveys, the *Violence Against Women Survey* (1993) and the *General Social Survey* (1999), have provided us with insight into the nature and prevalence of family violence and how it is changing over time. While the content of these two surveys (in relation to spousal violence) is similar, methodological differences between the two surveys exist and comparisons should therefore be made with some degree of caution. The *General Social Survey* also provides us with valuable information about violent crime victimization and its impact. A complete list of sources for all statistical information appears at the end of this document.

While there is reason to be cautiously optimistic with some of the 1999 findings, there are also indications that much remains to be done for women to be safe, and to feel safe, both within and outside of their homes.

Rates of spousal assault against women appear to have declined slightly in recent years. In 1993, 13 percent of women in Nova Scotia had experienced assault at the hands of their spouse or common-law partner within the preceding five years. By 1999, this had declined to 8 percent.

Some of the possible reasons for the decrease in spousal assaults against women may be related to the increased availability of services for abused women and programs for abusive men, increased use of helping services, and higher rates of reporting of spousal violence to police by female victims. It should be noted, however, that while evidence suggests that female victims of spousal violence are more likely to report the violence to police now than they were in the past, the

majority of such violence (64 percent) still remains unreported.

Although women now report experiencing spousal assault only slightly more often than men (8% versus 6% in Nova Scotia in 1999), the nature and consequences of violence are more severe for female victims. Women, for example, are two and a half times more likely to be beaten and five times more likely to be choked than are men. Women are five times more likely to require medical attention and are five and a half times more likely to fear for their lives as a consequence of spousal violence.

Women also remain much likelier than men to be victims of spousal violence at its most extreme. Over the past two decades, three times as many Canadian women were killed by their spouse/partner than were Canadian men. In almost all provinces and territories, spousal homicides of women outnumber spousal homicides of men by at least two to one.

Separation from a spouse or intimate partner elevates the risk of spousal homicide for women. This is especially true for young women. Women who are under 25 and separated have the highest risk of being killed by their former spouse/partner.

There are a number of socio-demographic factors related to violence against women. Young women, women in common-law relationships, women whose partners are heavy drinkers, and women whose partners engage in emotionally abusive behavior are all at higher risk of experiencing physical abuse from a spouse or partner.

Ethno-cultural factors also play a role. Aboriginal women are three times more likely to have experienced spousal violence as compared to non-Aboriginal women.

Women comprised slightly more than one third (36 percent) of all homicide victims in Nova Scotia between 1991 and 1998. Half of these women were killed by their intimate partners, compared to 13 percent of male victims. Similarly, the majority of female victims of criminal harassment (stalking) were stalked by men with whom they had had a previous intimate relationship.

In the last decade, rates of reported sexual assault appear to have declined in both Nova Scotia and Canada. It is important to note, however, that police data greatly underestimates the incidence of sexual assault. Victimization surveys indicate that, at most, only 10 percent of women who have been sexually assaulted report the incident to police. Some of the reasons women give for not

reporting sexual assault to police include: the perception that police won't believe them or that police would do nothing about it; not wanting people to know about it due to embarassment, fear, or shame; concern about the attitude of police and courts toward sexual assault; and fear of revenge by the offender or his family/friends.

Though the majority of both women and men in Canada report that they feel safe from violent crime generally, women are more likely to feel unsafe in certain circumstances, such as when using or waiting for public transportation alone after dark or walking alone after dark. Not surprisingly, therefore, women are more likely than men to take routine measures to ensure their personal safety. Close to three quarters of women routinely lock their car doors when alone and more than 8 times as many women as men (17% versus 2%) stay home at night because they are afraid to go out alone.

There are certain other forms of violence that are greatly understudied but which affect women profoundly. These types of violence include elder abuse, parent abuse, abuse of women in lesbian relationships, and abuse of women with disabilities. Much more research is required to fully understand the extent and nature of these serious problems.

Rates of spousal assault against women appear to be declining.

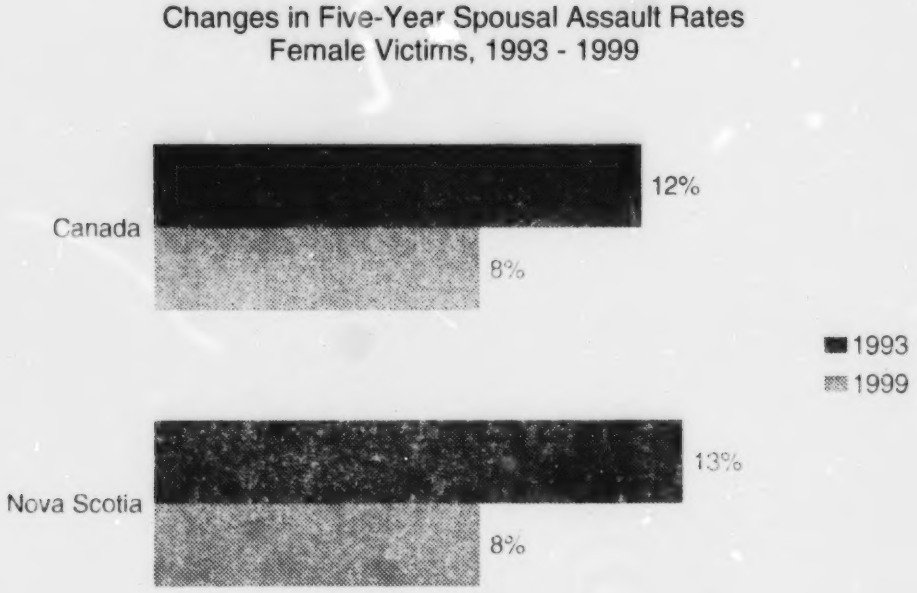

Figure 1.

- In 1999, 8 percent of Nova Scotian women who were married or living in a common-law relationship during the previous five-year period experienced some form of violence committed by their partner.[1]

- In 1993, 13 percent of Nova Scotian women had experienced spousal assault at some point in the five preceding years.

Women experience more severe forms of spousal violence.

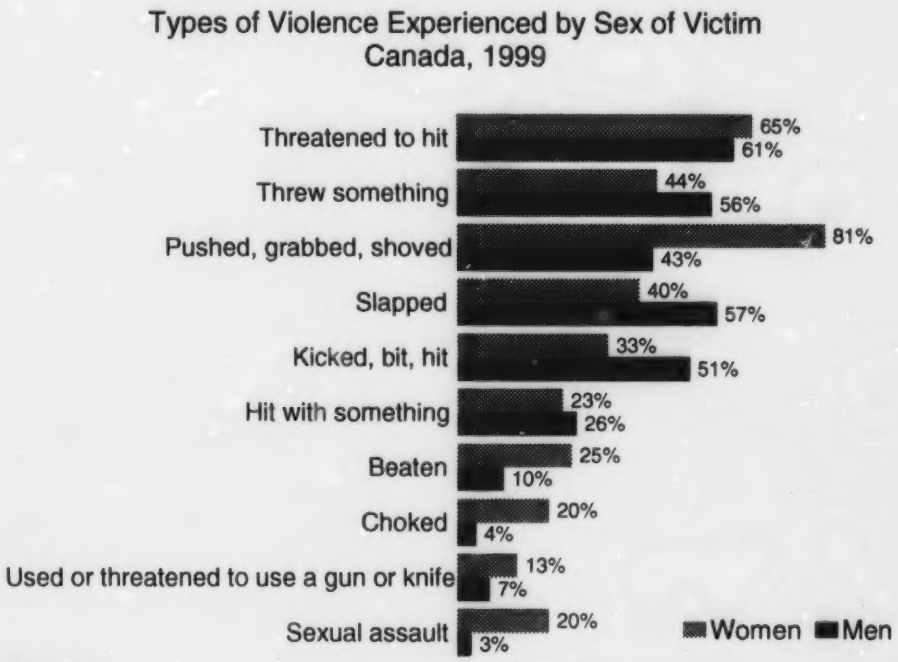

Figure 2.

- Although women report experiencing spousal violence only slightly more often than men (8 percent versus 6 percent in Nova Scotia), the type of violence they experience is often much more severe.

- Female victims of spousal violence are two and a half times as likely to be beaten, five times as likely to be choked, and are almost twice as likely to have been assaulted or threatened with a gun or knife than are male victims of spousal abuse.

The consequences of spousal violence are often more serious for women.

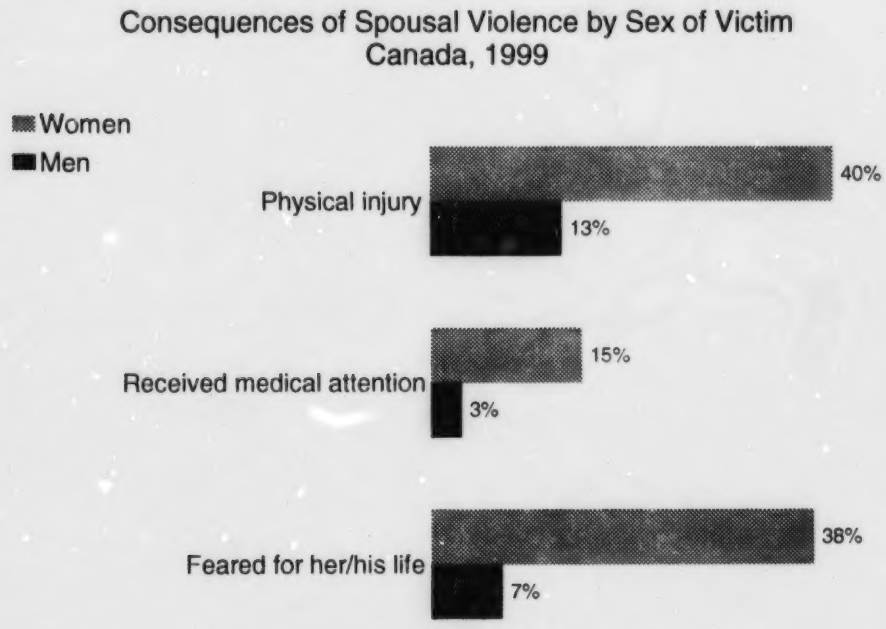

Figure 3.

- Women are more likely to report serious consequences of spousal violence than men.
- Women report being injured as a result of spousal violence 3 times more often than men, they report receiving medical attention 5 times more often than men, and they report fearing for their lives almost 5 and a half times more often than men.
- In the majority of cases, spousal violence is not an isolated incident. 65 percent of female victims and 54 percent of male victims of spousal assault reported being victimized on more than one occasion.

Women in all provinces are much more likely to be victims of spousal homicide than men.

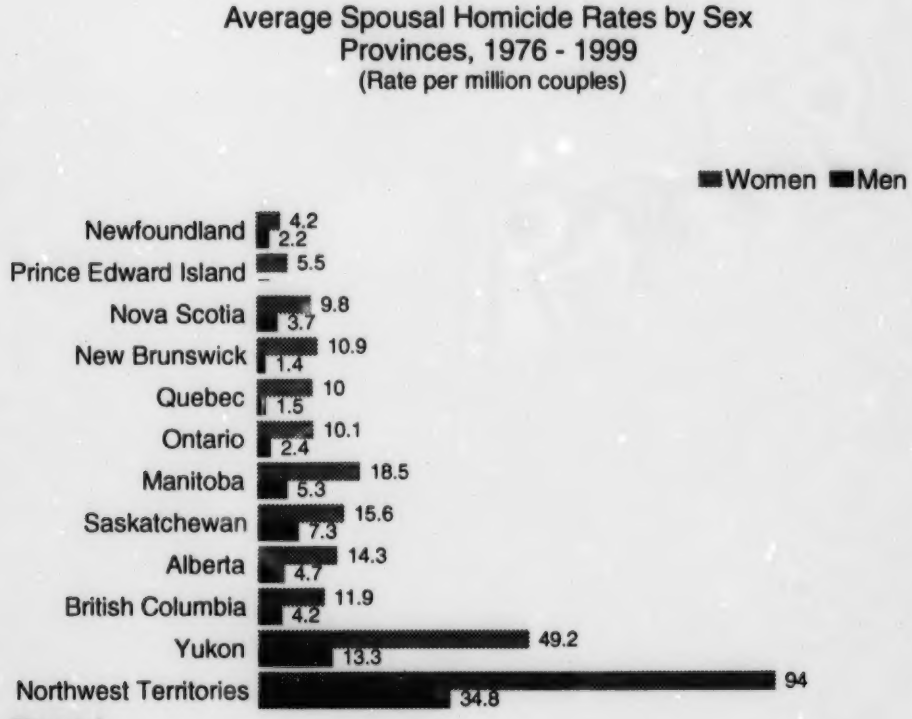

Figure 4.

- Spousal homicides have accounted for 15 percent of all homicides in Canada over the last twenty years.
- In almost all provinces and territories, spousal homicides of wives outnumber spousal homicides of husbands by a ratio of at least 2 to 1.
- In Nova Scotia between 1976 and 1999, an average of 9.8 wives per million couples was murdered compared to 3.7 husbands.

The risk of spousal homicide is greatest for women who are separated.

Spousal Homicide Rates by Sex and Marital Status of Victim
Canada, 1991 - 1999
(Rate per million couples)

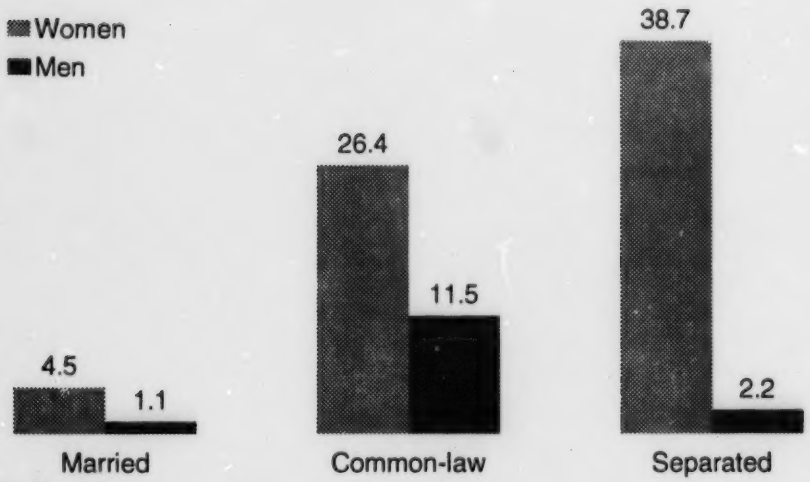

Figure 5.

- Separation from an intimate partner or spouse elevates the risk of spousal homicide for women.
- 28% of female spousal homicide victims in Canada between 1991 and 1999 were killed by former spouses/intimate partners.
- Women under the age of 24 and who are separated have the highest risk of being victims of spousal homicide of any group. 126.4 women per million couples in this group were killed between 1991 and 1999.

Rates of spousal violence are higher among Aboriginal women.

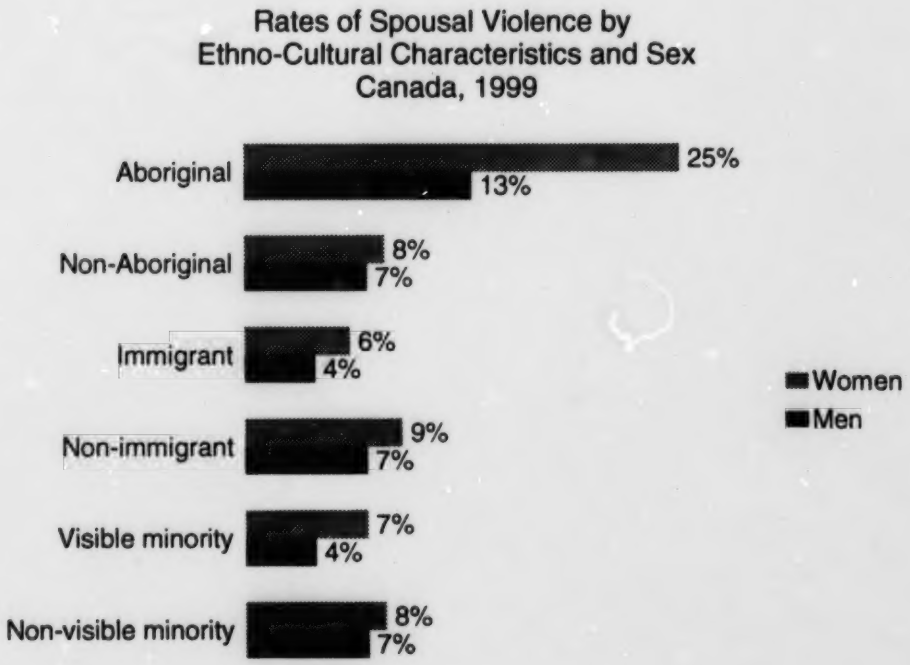

Figure 6.

- There are differences in rates of spousal violence experienced by women depending on their ethno-cultural background.
- Most notably, Aboriginal women in Canada are three times more likely to have experienced spousal violence as compared to non-Aboriginal women.
- Aboriginal women who are victims of spousal violence are also likelier to be physically injured (49% versus 40%) and to receive medical attention (23% versus 15%) than non-Aboriginal female victims of spousal violence.

Close to 40 percent of all spousal violence is witnessed by children.

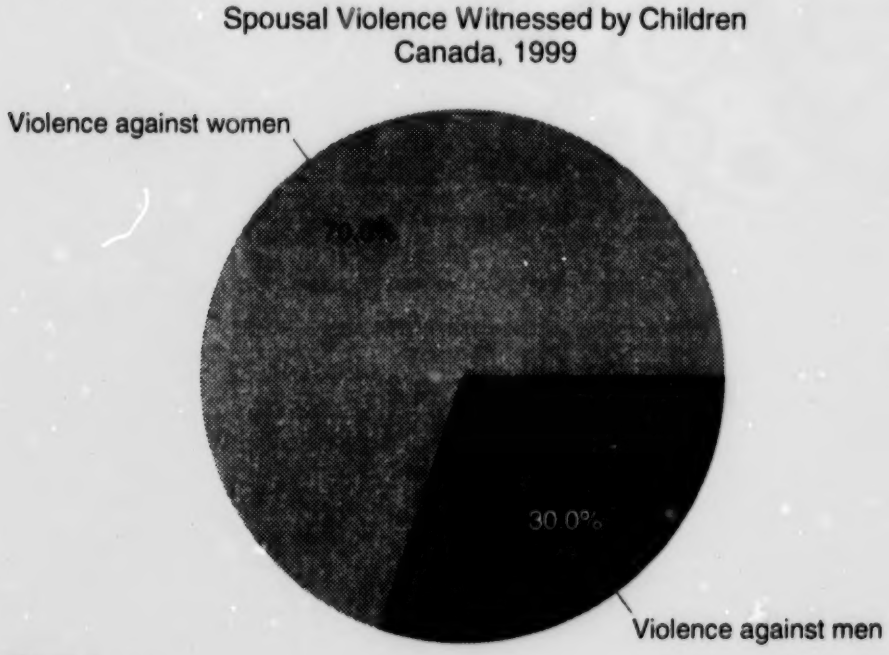

Figure 7.

- Children heard or saw one parent assaulting the other in 37 percent (or 461,000 households) of all households with spousal violence in Canada.
- In 70 percent of cases where children witnessed family violence, the violence was directed at their mothers.
- The violence against their mothers that children witnessed also tended to be more serious. In half of all cases of wife assault witnessed by children, the women feared for their lives or were physically injured.

Factors related to violence against women:

Age
Women under the age of 25 are more likely to be victims of spousal assault and spousal homicide than women over the age of 25.[2]

Marital Status
Women who are in common-law relationships are at greater risk of spousal assault than married women. Depending on age, the risk of being killed by a spouse/partner is 2½ to 8½ times greater for women in common-law relationships than it is for married women[3].

Separation
Marital separation, especially in the initial stages, can be the most dangerous time for abused women. Women who are separated are more than 8 times as likely to be victims of spousal homicide than married women and are one and a half times more likely to be victims of spousal homicide than women who are living in a common-law relationship. Women who are both separated and under the age of 25 are at particularly high risk of spousal homicide.[3]

Aboriginal status
Aboriginal women have rates of spousal violence that are three times greater than that of non-Aboriginal women (25% versus 8%).[3]

Presence of emotional abuse by partner
Women whose current partners engage in emotional abuse are ten times as likely to experience violence than women whose partners do not engage in emotional abuse.[2]

Partner's alcohol use
Women whose partners are heavy drinkers are six times more likely to have experienced spousal assault within the past year than women whose partners drink alcohol 2-3 times per week or less.[2]

Despite recent increases in reporting to police, most spousal violence against women does not get reported.

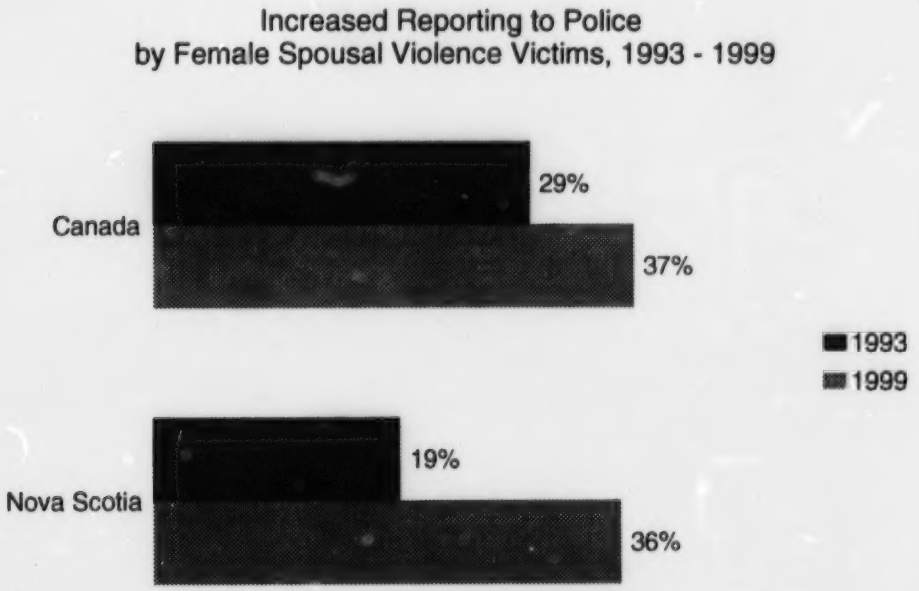

Figure 8.

- Though the incidence of spousal assault has declined slightly in recent years, those women who are currently being abused are more likely to report it to police.
- In 1993, only 19 percent of women in Nova Scotia who experienced spousal violence reported it to police, compared to 29 percent of women in Canada as a whole.
- By 1999, 36 percent of women in Nova Scotia who experienced spousal violence reported it to police. This was comparable to the national reporting rate of 37 percent.
- Despite these increases, 64 percent of spousal violence against women in Nova Scotia does not get reported to police.

Use of helping services by abused women appears to be increasing.

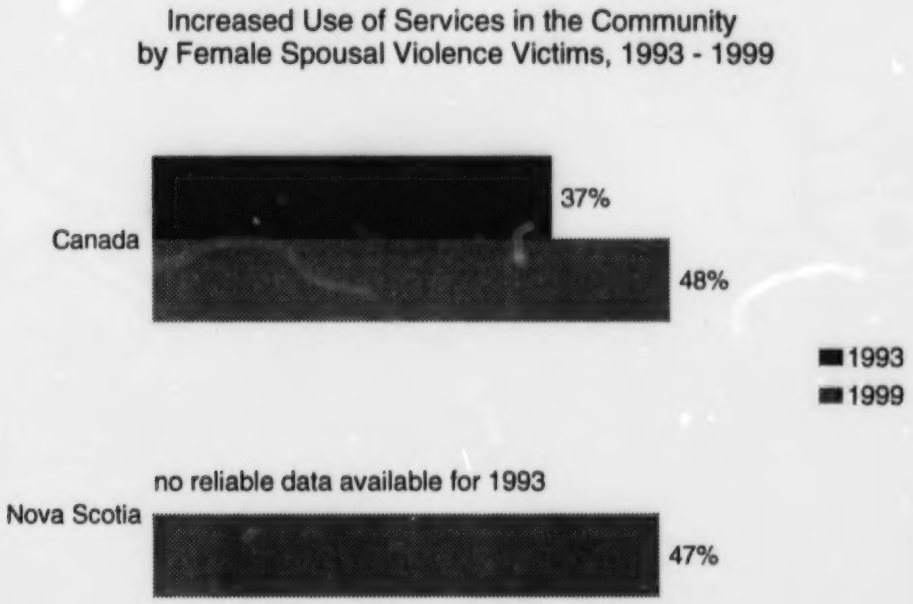

Figure 9.

- As is the case with reporting of spousal violence to police, female victims of spousal violence are also making increasing use of helping services in their communities.
- Between 1993 and 1999, Canadian female spousal abuse victims' use of helping services, including shelters, counsellors, family service centres, private therapists and women's centres, increased from 37 percent to 48 percent.
- Nova Scotian women's use of services for spousal abuse in 1999 was comparable to that of Canadian women as a whole at 47 percent.

Last year, Nova Scotia's nine transition houses had over 1,500 admissions and close to 20,000 distress calls.

Transition House Admissions
Nova Scotia,1992 - 2000

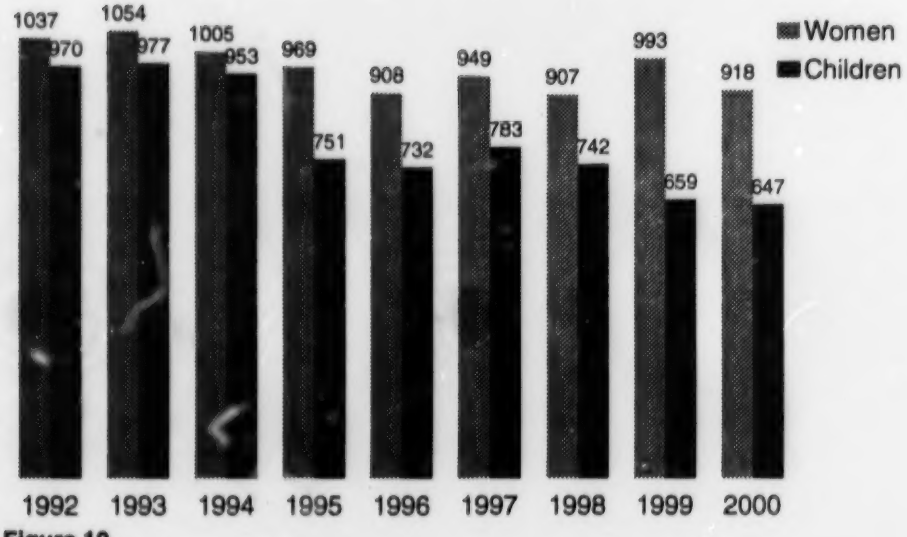

Figure 10.

- 918 women and 647 children stayed in Nova Scotia's nine transition houses in the year 2000.
- In the same year, Nova Scotia's transition houses took 19,968 distress calls and had 6,323 distress visits.
- Women and children admitted to transition houses in Nova Scotia last year stayed a total of 23,704 days, down from 28,566 days in 1992.
- 21 percent of women who stayed in Nova Scotia transition houses last year were admitted more than once during the year.

We know little about certain forms of violence against women.

Elder Abuse

There are no recent statistics available on the abuse of elderly persons. A national study conducted in 1990 indicated that 4 percent of elderly persons in private dwellings had experienced some form of abuse or neglect. The most common forms of abuse of elderly persons were financial and emotional abuse.[4] According to a recent (1999) victimization survey, seniors are much likelier to have experienced emotional or financial abuse (7%) than physical assault (1%) by a family member.[2] Women over the age of 70, people who are socially or geographically isolated, and people with physical or mental health limitations have the highest risks of being victims of elder abuse.[4]

Abuse of Women in Lesbian Relationships

There are no reliable statistics available to show the scope of this problem. One small-scale Canadian survey indicated that approximately 10 percent of lesbian women have experienced physical assault by a partner.[5]

Parent Abuse

Abuse of parents by their adolescent/teenage children is not an easily quantifiable problem. Because police records don't show the relationship between the victim and the accused in charges of assault and because the *Young Offenders' Act* prevents access to information on charges against minors, statistical information on parent abuse is virtually non-existent. Anecdotal evidence and professional opinions of family counselors suggest that the incidence of parent abuse is on the rise. Qualitative studies of parent abuse indicate that mothers and step-mothers, both in single and two-parent homes are the most common target of teenagers' abusive behavior.[6]

Abuse of Women with Disabilities

According to the 1991 *Health and Activity Limitations Study* (HALS), Nova Scotia has the highest proportion (21.3%) of persons living with a disability in all of Canada. A number of studies have indicated that women with disabilities are at higher risk for violence and abuse. Estimates vary widely, from 1.5 to 10 times the rate of violence against non-disabled women, depending on the study and whether the woman with a disability lives in the community or in an institution.[7]

Overall, women in Nova Scotia are less likely to be victims of homicide than men.

Figure 11.

- Between 1991 and 1998, 105 men and 58 women in Nova Scotia were victims of homicide.
- Women were victims in 36 percent of homicides in Nova Scotia during this period.
- The victim-suspect relationship is very different for male and female victims of homicide.

Women are almost four times more likely than men to be murdered by an intimate partner.

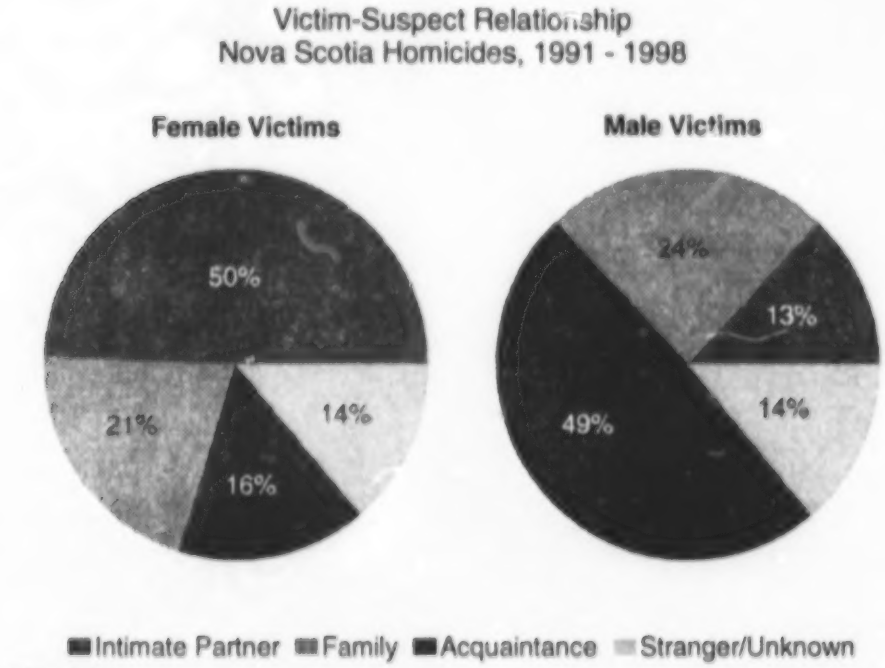

Figure 12.

- Most female victims of homicide are killed by their spouses or intimate partners whereas most male victims of homicide are killed by acquaintances.
- Between 1991 and 1998, half (50 percent) of all female victims of homicide in Nova Scotia were killed by their spouses or intimate partners, compared to 13 percent of male victims.
- Women in Nova Scotia are three and a half times more likely to be killed by their spouse/partner than they are by a stranger whereas men are just as likely to be killed by a stranger as they are by their spouse/partner.

Three quarters of criminal harassment victims are women.

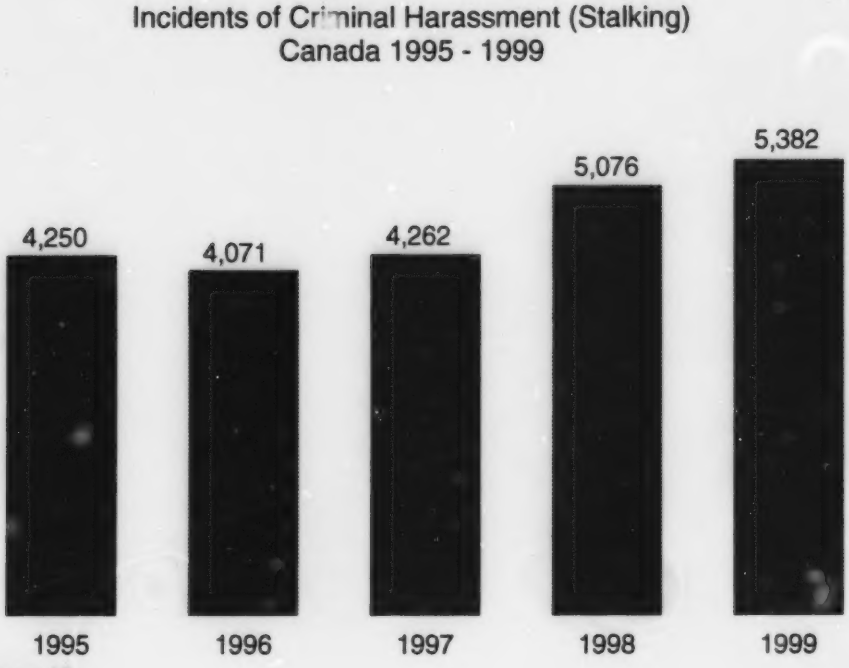

Figure 13.

- The number of criminal harassment incidents reported to police increased by 32 percent from 1996 to 1999.
- 77 percent of criminal harassment victims are female and 84 percent of those accused of criminal harassment are male.
- In 58 percent of cases, women are stalked by men with whom they had been in previous intimate relationships (ex-husband or ex-boyfriend), whereas the majority of male victims are stalked by casual acquaintances, strangers or business acquaintances.

Though the reported sexual assault rate in Nova Scotia appears to be declining, sexual assault goes unreported in the vast majority of cases.

Rates of Reported Sexual Assault (per 100,000 population)
Nova Scotia and Canada, 1990 - 2000

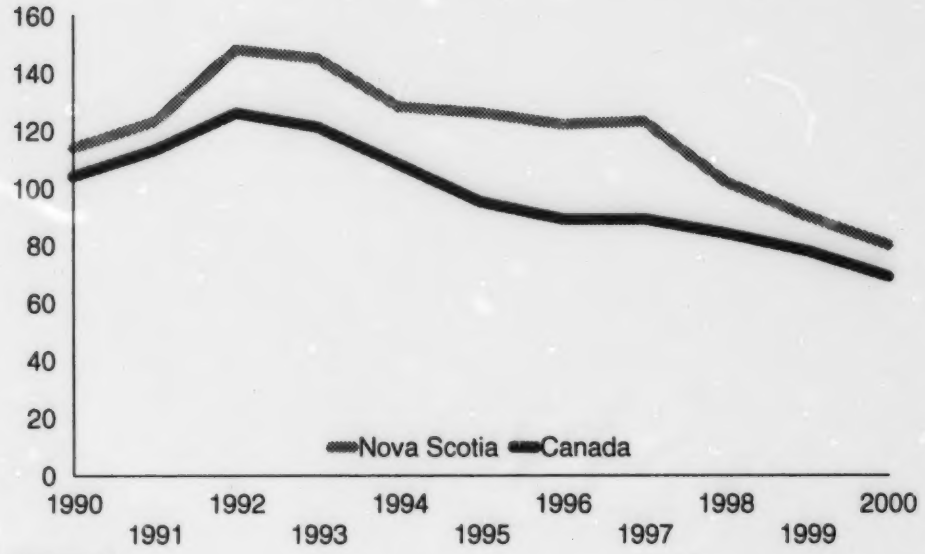

Figure 14.

- According to victimization surveys, the vast majority of sexual assaults against women are not reported to police. In 1993, the *Violence Against Women Survey* indicated that only 6 percent of sexual assaults were reported to police. Police data, therefore, greatly underestimates the incidence of sexual assault.

- Rates of reported sexual assault, both provincially and nationally, appear to have declined over the past ten years. In 2000, Nova Scotia's reported sexual assault rate was 80 per 100,000 population, higher than the national rate of 69 per 100,000 population.

- In 1998/99, while 97 percent of those accused of sexual assault were male, over 80 percent of sexual assault victims were female.

Women feel less safe from violent crime than men.

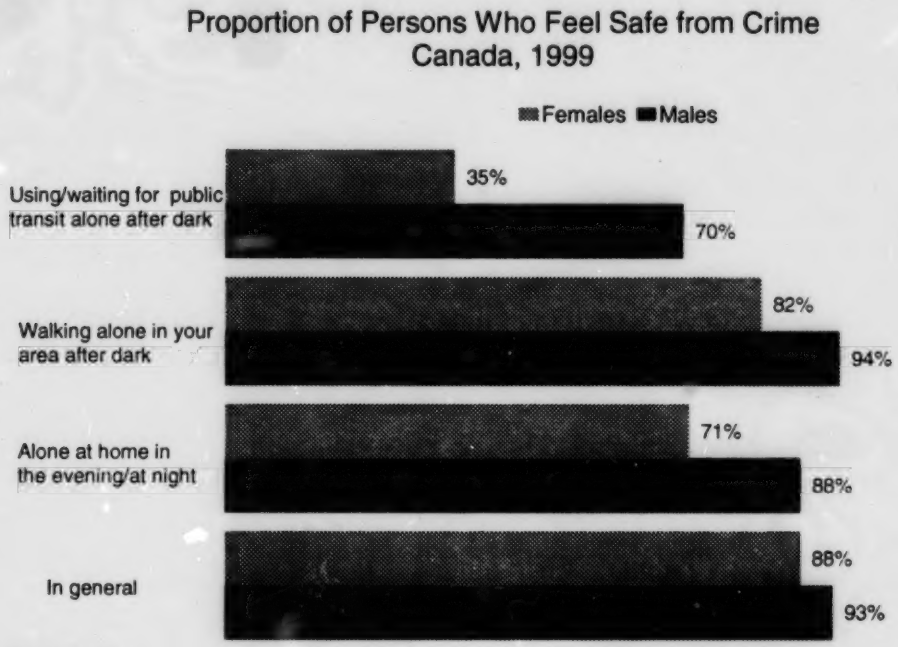

Figure 15.

- Although the majority of both Canadian women and men feel safe from crime in general (88 and 93 percent respectively), women are more likely than men to feel unsafe in certain circumstances.
- Most notably, only 35 percent of Canadian women report feeling safe when using or waiting for public transportation alone after dark compared to 70 percent of men.
- Women are also significantly less likely than men to report feeling safe when alone at home in the evening or at night (71 percent versus 88 percent).

The emotional consequences of violent crime are more severe for women.

Emotional Consequences of Violent Crime by Sex of Victim
Canada, 1999

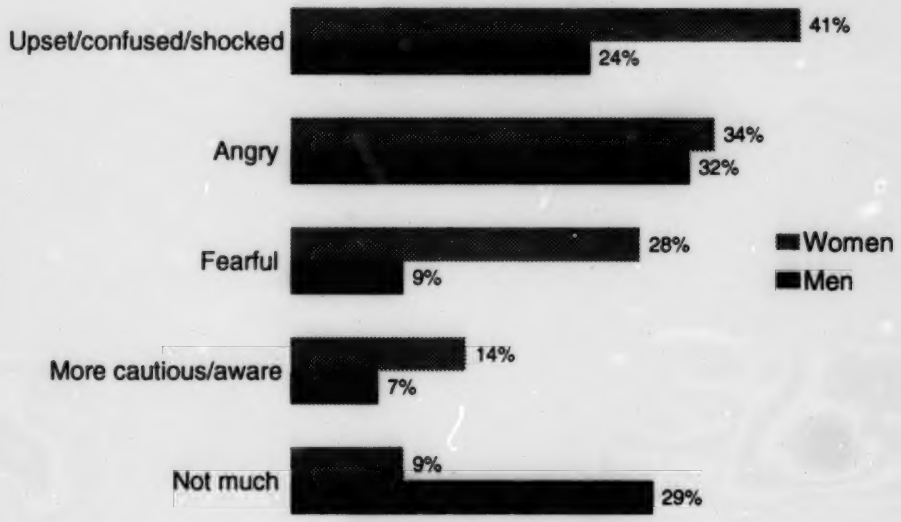

Figure 16.

- The emotional consequences of violent victimization can vary considerably, depending on the sex of the victim.
- Although female and male victims of violent crimes such as sexual assault, robbery, and assault, are equally likely to feel anger as a consequence, compared to men, women are more likely to report feeling upset/confused/shocked (41% versus 24%), fearful (28% versus 9%), and cautious/aware (14% versus 7%) as a result of violent victimization.
- Conversely, male victims of violent crime are three times more likely than female victims to report the incident did not affect them much (29% versus 9%).

Women are much likelier than men to take measures to ensure personal safety.

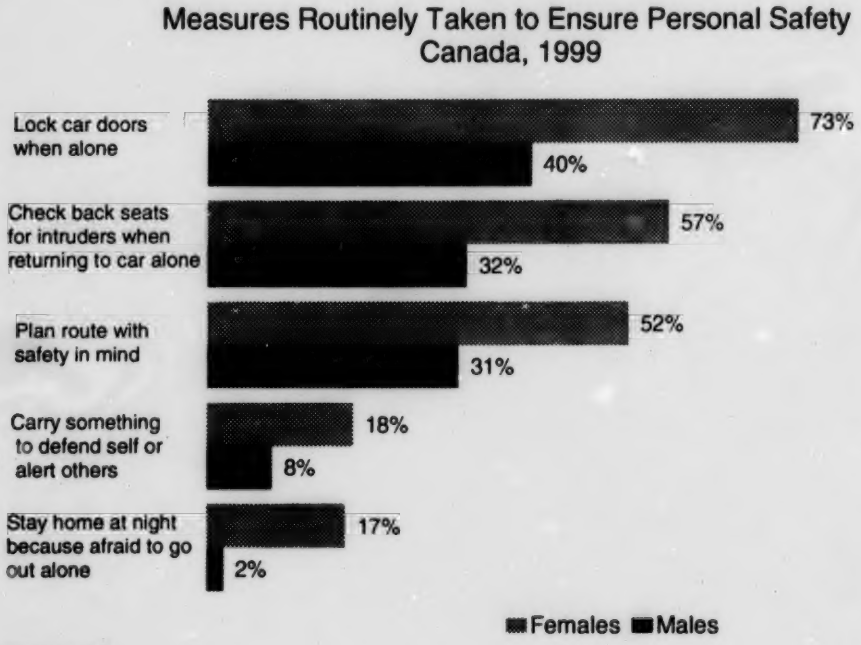

Figure 17.

- Close to three quarters of women routinely lock their car doors when alone, compared to 40 percent of men.
- More than half of women routinely check back seats for intruders when returning to their car alone and plan their routes out with safety in mind.
- Women are more than twice as likely as men (18 versus 8 percent) to carry something to defend themselves or alert others.
- Women are more than 8 times as likely as men (17 versus 2 percent) to stay home at night because they are afraid to go out alone.

Sources

Figure 1.
Changes in Five-Year Spousal Assault Rates
Female Victims, 1993 - 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-224-XIE.

Figure 2.
Types of Violence Experienced by Sex of Victim
Canada, 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-224-XIE.

Figure 3.
Consequences of Spousal Violence by Sex of Victim
Canada, 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-224-XIE.

Figure 4.
Average Spousal Homicide Rates by Sex
Provinces, 1976 - 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-224-XIE.

Figure 5.
Spousal Homicide Rates by Sex and Marital Status of Victim
Canada, 1991 - 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-224-XIE.

Figure 6.
Rates of Spousal Violence by Ethno-Cultural Characteristics and Sex
Canada, 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *A Profile of Criminal Victimization: Results of the 1999 General Social Survey*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-553-XIE.

Figure 7.
Spousal Violence Witnessed by Children
Canada, 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *Children Witnessing Family Violence*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-002-XIE Vol. 21 no.6.

Figure 8.
Increased Reporting to Police
by Female Spousal Violence Victims, 1993 - 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-224-XIE.

Figure 9.
Increased Use of Services in the Community
by Female Spousal Violence Victims, 1993 - 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-224-XIE.

Figure 10.
Transition House Admissions
Nova Scotia,1992 - 2000
Source: Nova Scotia Department of Community Services

Figure 11.
Male and Female Victims of Homicide
Nova Scotia, 1991 - 1998
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Homicide Survey*, 1998, data provided by Nova Scctia Department of Justice.

Figure 12.
Victim-Suspect Relationship
Nova Scotia Homicides, 1991 - 1998
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey, 1998, data provided by Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

Figure 13.
Incidents of Criminal Harassment (Stalking)
Canada 1995 - 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE Vol. 20 no.11

Figure 14.
Rates of Reported Sexual Assault (per 100,000 population)
Nova Scotia and Canada, 1990 - 2000
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Uniform Crime Reporting Survey*, data provided by Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

Figure 15.
Proportion of Persons Who Feel Safe from Crime
Canada, 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *A Profile of Criminal Victimization: Results of the 1999 General Social Survey*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-553-XIE.

Figure 16.
Emotional Consequences of Violent Crime by Sex of Victim
Canada, 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *A Profile of Criminal Victimization: Results of the 1999 General Social Survey*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-553-XIE.

Figure 17.
Measures Routinely Taken to Ensure Personal Safety
Canada, 1999
Source: Statistics Canada, *A Profile of Criminal Victimization: Results of the 1999 General Social Survey*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-553-XIE.

Notes

[1] Some caution should be used when making comparisons between data from the 1993 *Violence Against Women Survey* (VAWS) and the 1999 *General Social Survey* (GSS). The VAWS was a dedicated survey on violence against women, while the GSS was a general crime victim survey which included a special module of questions modeled after the VAWS. Although the two surveys were similar in content, some methodological differences were evident.

[2] Statistics Canada. (2000). *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile* Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Catalogue No. 85-224-XIE.

[3] Statistics Canada. *(2001). Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile* Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Catalogue No. 85-224-XIE.

[4] Podnieks, Elizabeth, et al. (1990). National survey on abuse of the elderly in Canada: The Ryerson Study. Ontario: Ryerson Polytechnical Institute.

[5] National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Health Canada: Catalogue No. H72-21/153-1998.

[6] Cottrell, Barbara. (2001). Parent Abuse: The Abuse of Parents by their Teenage Children. Health Canada: Catalogue No. H72-21/180-2000E.

[7] National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Health Canada: Catalogue No. H72-22/9-1993E.

Technical Notes

Measurement of Spousal Violence:

In both the 1999 *General Social Survey* (GSS) and the 1993 *Violence Against Women Survey* (VAWS), violence by a spouse or common-law partner was measured by a module of 10 questions. Respondents who had contact with a spouse or common-law partner in the five years prior to the interview were asked the following questions:

During the past five years, has your spouse/partner:

1. Threatened you with his/her fist or anything else that could have hurt you?
2. Thrown anything at you that could have hurt you?
3. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you in a way that could have hurt you?
4. Slapped you?
5. Kicked, bit, or hit you with his/her fist?
6. Hit you with something that could have hurt you?
7. Beaten you?
8. Choked you?
9. Used or threatened to use a gun or knife on you?
10. Forced you into any unwanted sexual activity by threatening you, holding you down, or hurting you in some way?

Source: Statistics Canada. *(2001). Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile.* Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Catalogue No. 85-224-XIE.

Criminal Harassment (Stalking)

Criminal harassment, also known as stalking, is a form of obsessive behavior directed toward another person. Stalking became a criminal offence in Canada in 1993 and is covered by section 264 of Canada's *Criminal Code*. Criminal harassment is defined as repeatedly following another person from place to place or repeatedly trying to contact the person. The legislation also encompasses such behaviours as watching or keeping watch over someone's home or place of business and making threats toward another person. For a person to be charged with criminal harassment, the victim must have reasonable cause to fear for his or her safety or the safety of someone close to them.

Source: Statistics Canada. *(2000). Criminal Harassment.* Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Catalogue No. 85-002-XPE Vol. 20 no. 11.

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault refers to forced sexual activity, an attempt at forced sexual activity, or unwanted sexual touching, grabbing, kissing, or fondling. There are three levels of sexual assault described in the *Criminal Code*. These range from a level I offence, where the victim sustains minor physical injuries or no injuries, level II which involves the use of a weapon or threats, and level III (aggravated sexual assault) which results in wounding, maiming, disfiguring, or endangering the victim's life.

Source: Statistics Canada. *(2001). A Profile of Criminal Victimization: Results of the 1999 General Social Survey.* Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Catalogue No. 85-553-XIE.